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Staten Island Chamber of  
Commerce

Report of the  
Ferry Committee...

[New York]

[1902]

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LOUIS L. TRIBUS, C. F.  
84 WARREN STREET,  
NEW YORK

SEP 11 1902

REPORT  
OF THE  
FERRY COMMITTEE  
OF THE  
STATEN ISLAND  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

SEPTEMBER 30, 1902

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REPORT  
OF  
THE FERRY COMMITTEE  
OF THE  
STATEN ISLAND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
SEPTEMBER 30TH,  
1902

TO THE DIRECTORS AND MEMBERS OF  
THE STATEN ISLAND CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE, THE CITIZENS AND  
RESIDENTS OF STATEN  
ISLAND:

Staten Island, Sept. 30, 1902.

GENTLEMEN:

The desire on the part of the people of Staten Island for better ferry facilities has been given expression in the proceedings of the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce since 1896, when the absolute necessity for better means of transportation between Manhattan and Richmond was so apparent as to demand an organized effort on the part of the people. Committees of representative men were from time to time appointed by the Directors of the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce for the purpose of carefully investigating the requirements of the different sections of Staten Island, and as the result of their painstaking labor, reports were prepared and submitted at different times to the Directors of the Chamber, to the people of Staten Island and after the consolidation, to the Municipal authorities of the City of New York, while requests were made of the Ferry Company for better facilities.

On December 12th, 1901, a committee consisting of Mr. L. L. Tribus, at present Commissioner of Public Works for the Borough of Richmond; Mr. Chas. W. Hunt, former President

of the Chamber of Commerce, and Mr. Albert E. Hadlock, now Assistant Corporation Counsel for the Borough of Richmond, made a report which was condensed in the following twelve recommendations:

FIRST.—The absolute reservation of two slips at the Whitehall terminal for Staten Island business.

SECOND.—More frequent trips than at present for passengers from St. George to Manhattan and Manhattan to St. George; made in not over 20 minutes average time for each trip, dock to dock.

THIRD.—New boats, well lighted, well heated, well ventilated; having the hull divided into water-tight, non-communicating compartments and equipped with up-to-date sanitary conveniences, kept in cleanly condition.

FOURTH.—Life preservers, life boats and rafts in sufficient number to accommodate, not the average number of passengers that the law now requires, but the maximum.

FIFTH.—Landings from the upper decks at both ends of the ferry, so as to connect with the elevated service in Manhattan and the electric and footbridge service on Staten Island.

SIXTH.—Quicker acting and less clumsy tying up devices at the landings, with broader exits from the boats, which should be shaped to fit the bridge thus eliminating gang planks.

SEVENTH.—Commutation or reduced fares at rates as favorable as those on other suburban lines.

EIGHTH.—Additional ferry boats making landings on the north and east shores of Staten Island running at frequent intervals, for team traffic particularly; but carrying passengers also if they desire to go; rates for all such traffic to be as low relatively as on other ferries running to points on the west and east sides of Manhattan.

NINTH.—If the city can provide in Manhattan adequate landing places, certain trips of these "along shore" boats to run to suitable points on the North and East Rivers.

TENTH.—To request the city authorities to acquire by purchase or condemnation suitable landing places on Staten Island, necessary for such improved ferry facilities as are herein suggested.

ELEVENTH.—To insure the continuance and even improvement of the ferry facilities and provide for changing conditions, the securing of some method by which the citizens of Richmond and Manhattan when they feel that the facilities are inadequate can appeal for relief to some official or officials, who shall be given discretion and power to order such changes as might seem to be necessary.

TWELFTH.—To facilitate the financing of such ferry companies, the franchise grants covering the foregoing requirements should be for twenty or twenty-five years and be made at least one year before termination of the old franchise, to permit of new parties making adequate provision for necessary boats.

This report was submitted to Mayor Low, who in his message, sent to the Board of Aldermen on the 4th of March, 1902, pointed out the necessity of improved transportation facilities between the Boroughs of Manhattan and Richmond as follows:

"In this connection I desire to call attention also to the importance of the ferry question between the Boroughs, and especially between the Boroughs of Manhattan and Richmond.

As between Manhattan and Richmond, the necessity for improved ferry communication is evident and pressing. The new charter gives to the Commissioners of the Sinking Fund, upon the recommendations of the Commissioner of Docks, authority to enter into a ferry lease for the period of twenty-five years. In making such a lease the City may well insist upon a sufficient number of boats of the best character; upon as many landings; places as may be deemed desirable; upon such frequency of trips, such a rate of speed, and such a rate of fare as will thoroughly protect the public interest and promote the growth of the beautiful Borough of Richmond. I have charged the Commissioner of Docks to give this matter, at the earliest possible day, the most careful and complete study.

At the same time the Mayor re-

quested the appointment of a committee representing the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce for the purpose of conferring with the Department of Docks and Ferries and himself in regard to a plan of action for the improvement of the ferry service between the two Boroughs mentioned. The Directors accordingly appointed Mr. Geo. J. Greenfield, Mr. David J. Tyson, and Mrs. Gugsy A.E. Irving, members, and Cornelius G. Kolff, Secretary, of this committee.

This committee had a number of conferences with the Commissioner of Docks and Ferries on the subject of an improvement in the ferry service between the Boroughs of Richmond and Manhattan; the three particular points under consideration being:

First.—The reservation of both ferry slips at the foot of Whitehall Street for the Staten Island Ferry Service.

Second.—The purchase by the City of ferry landings on Staten Island, and

Third.—The establishment of three ferry terminals on Staten Island—one at St. George, one at Stapleton or Clifton, and one at West New Brighton or Port Richmond.

The first point at issue, the reservation of both ferry slips at the foot of Whitehall Street, Manhattan, for the Staten Island business, was brought to a successful issue by the Commissioner's refusal to grant one of the ferry slips to the Central R. R. of New Jersey; promising to retain it for the Staten Island ferry.

The second point at issue, the acquiring of ferry landings in the Borough of Richmond by the City of New York, was disposed of by the Commissioner of Docks and Ferries asking the Board of Estimate and Apportionment for its authority to purchase suitable sites for ferry landings, docks and piers at Clifton, St. George, and Port Richmond.

As regards the third point, however, great difficulty was encountered in

persuading the public authorities or the interests now operating the ferry, that three ferries could be profitably operated, and as there was only one interest apparently willing to consider the lease of the Staten Island ferry, the chances of the Committee seeing its recommendations adopted were rather doubtful.

During the latter part of June, 1902, the Baltimore & Ohio interests represented in the present Staten Island Ferry Company, made an application to the Commissioner of Docks and Ferries for a twenty-five years' franchise. The only terms made by the Ferry Company in exchange for a twenty-five years' franchise and the cancellation of the amount of \$22,000 now paid the City yearly for the franchise, was the placing in service of two new modern fast ferry boats between the foot of Whitehall Street, Manhattan, and St. George, as well as the reconstruction of the Castleton and Robert Garrett, so as to make them equal to the new boats in speed and comfort. It contained no promise calling for the establishment of separate ferries to the North and East shores of Staten Island, and consequently did not meet the views of the ferry committee.

The Commissioner of Docks and Ferries believing, however, that the offer made was the best that could be obtained, submitted a contract on these lines to the Commissioners of the Sinking Fund at the meeting on Tuesday, July 1st, 1902. At this meeting Mr. Edward Lauterbach representing Mr. H. H. Rogers, who had then acquired the Syndicate trolley on Staten Island, appeared and asked that action be deferred by the Sinking Fund on the grounds that Mr. Rogers would give a very much better service than that called for in the contract submitted, and after listening to arguments on the part of Mr. Lauterbach, Mr. George Cronwell, President of the Borough of Richmond, and the Commissioner of Docks and Ferries, the contract was

referred back to the Commissioner of Docks and Ferries for better terms.

Since that a number of conferences have taken place between the Ferry Committee on one hand, the Commissioner of Docks and Ferries, Mr. Edward Lauterbach, Mr. Chas. L. Spier, representing Mr. H. H. Rogers, and the Directors of the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce. These meetings disclosed the fact that the Staten Island Ferry Company is owned one-half by the Baltimore & Ohio interests and one-half by Mr. H. H. Rogers and associates. There is apparently a difference of opinion between Mr. Rogers and his partners in the Ferry Company as to the steps that should be taken for the betterment of the ferry service, upon which the material development of the Borough rests in such a large degree.

For the purpose of fully acquainting himself with the requirements of the situation, both on the part of the people of Richmond and any corporation which may wish to operate ferries between the Boroughs of Richmond and Manhattan, Mr. Rogers selected Mr. Chas. L. Spier, a gentleman well versed in transportation matters, to make a careful investigation on the subject of an improvement of the trolley service and the ferry service between Staten Island and Manhattan.

As a result of his efforts a report has been submitted to Mr. Rogers to the effect that the interests of Staten Island could be best served by the abandonment of the ferry landing at St. George and the establishment of two ferry landings, one at West New Brighton and one at Tompkinsville; both points offering a great many advantages as ferry terminals and points of distribution both for passengers and teams.

Mr. Rogers after careful consideration has informed the ferry committee of the Chamber of Commerce that if the people of Staten Island considered it to be in their interest to have

these two ferry landings as proposed, that he is prepared immediately to apply to the Commissioner of Docks and Ferries for a franchise to run ferries from the foot of Whitehall Street, New York, to both Tompkinsville and West New Brighton, and it is his intention to arrange the Syndicate lines, as well as the Midland R. R. lines, which have recently come under the control of interests friendly to him, in a manner to fully serve the interests of the traveling public in the territory tributary to the points mentioned, which practically embraces the whole of Staten Island.

The establishment of ferry landings at the points mentioned would of course necessitate the rearrangement of the Rapid Transit train and passenger service in a manner to meet the requirements of the new conditions.

Your Committee realizing that increased ferry facilities are necessary for the development of the Island, would prefer the establishment of three ferries as originally recommended in its report of December 12, 1901, but owing to the difficulties encountered in inducing capital to engage in a ferry service of this nature, your committee is of the opinion that our interests will best be served by having two ferries, one at Tompkinsville and one at West New Brighton.

It therefore submits for your consideration on the following resolution:

*Whereas*, The Ferry Committee, appointed by the Directors of the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce has thus far been unable to induce any interests to carry out all the recommendations of the Chamber for the establishment of ferries at three points in the Borough of Richmond, namely at St. George, and at points

on the North and the East Shores of the Island, and,

*Whereas*, A counter proposition has been made for the establishment of two ferry terminals, one at Tompkinsville, at or near the foot of Arietta Street and the other at West New Brighton, at or near the foot of Broadway,

*Now therefore be it Resolved*, That the Chamber of Commerce and the people and the citizens of Staten Island in meeting assembled, recommend the adoption of the new suggestion, namely, the location of one ferry at Tompkinsville and one at West New Brighton; such ferries to be run in accordance with the requirements called for by the Chamber of Commerce in its previous reports, and in a manner to meet the approval of the Commissioner of Docks and Ferries.

Respectfully submitted,

GUY A. E. IRVING,

DAVID J. TYSEN,

CORNELIUS G. KOLFF,

Secretary.

In response to a general call, a public meeting was held at the First National Bank Building, St. George, on Tuesday, September 30th, 1902, and attended by about two hundred representative citizens from all parts of Staten Island. The above report was read and after a full discussion was unanimously adopted.

CORNELIUS G. KOLFF,

Secretary.

The resolution was then adopted and although the chairman paused for negative votes not a voice was heard. As he declared the resolution unanimously adopted the entire assemblage joined in an outburst of applause and cheering.



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TITLE**